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Versailles — Scene of the World's Peace Conference

By KARL SIDNEY SMITH

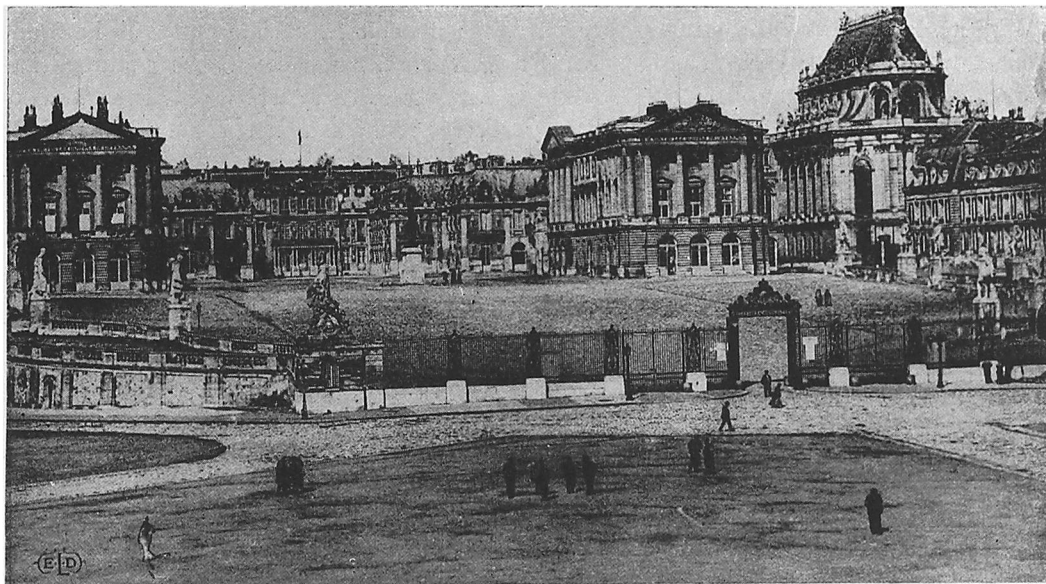
WHEN Louis XIV of France went to war he took with him two armies—one to fight and another to keep him company. This second army was composed of courtiers and ladies. Thus he made war a sort of carnival. This custom was only a manifestation of his extravagant nature. Among other evidences of this desire for splendor is the royal palace at Versailles, with its grounds.

This place now is the center of the world's interest by reason of its being the location of the most important Peace Conference in the history of the world. The present day situation was first used by the weak Louis XIII as a summer home. It was very convenient for him, being but twelve miles outside Paris.

Years later when his son, Louis XIV cast his eyes about for a suitable site for his palace, he chose this place. With the same disregard of expense which characterized all his transactions, this Louis hired the best architectural talent of the day and set hundreds of workmen to work upon his new palace.

In due time the structure was completed and was instantly recognized as a success. Magnificent enough to delight even Louis XIV it surpassed all other places in splendor and in cost. Indeed, so great was the cost that Louis found it necessary to destroy the accounts in order to avoid a detection of his extravagance.

To attempt a description of the palace that will be in any degree complete is to



THE PALACE—VERSAILLES—SCENE OF THE WORLD'S PEACE CONFERENCE



THE PALACE—GALLERIES OF THE BATTLES—VERSAILLES

overestimate the patience of the reader and the ability of the writer. Therefore an enumeration of the principal features of Versailles must suffice.

The palace consists of a central block and two seemingly interminable wings. With its dependencies this structure is over one-half a mile in length. The long wings are centered with long, bountifully decorated corridors and spacious halls. The Battle Gallery with its war-like aspect and the Hall of Mirrors, "The room without a shadow," are among the most famous of these halls.

Throughout the palace one finds imposing court-rooms, dining rooms, and last of all, the chambers. These are light, open rooms, highceilinged and roomy, reflecting all the majesty of royal natures. One alone is without this stiffness. This is the chamber that belonged to Marie Antoinette.

This unfortunate queen was married to Louis XVI when she was only fifteen years of age and was taken to Versailles to live. Away from home and friends, and horribly

bound by the killing routine of royal life, she was very unhappy. This little chamber which she herself arranged, with its dainty furnishings, is the one spot of simplicity that gives relief from the monotony of the stiff royal atmosphere.

A matchless art collection is to be found in Versailles today. Those paintings and pieces of statuary which adorn the walls of every room and hall cannot find equals. Some idea of the enormity of this collection may be gained from the information that one man, Louis Phillippe, placed there a collection of 5,000 masterpieces aggregating \$5,000,000 and that this number forms only a part of the total.

Charming gardens and grounds surround the palace. These grounds were carefully laid out and they are still very well cared for. There are terraces, ponds, marble statuary, woods, and small streams. An orangery with 1,200 trees, one of which is supposed to be four hundred and seventy-five years old, is another feature. Fruit orchards, artistically groomed, form an-

other attraction. Those men who are representing us at this conference are most certainly to be envied their privilege of viewing these sights.

Women have had much to do with the development of this place. Louis XIV had a weakness in his admiration of beautiful and talented women. This led him to come under the control of a certain Madame de Maintenon, the governess of his children. After the death of his wife he married this woman. Fortunately her influence was good. Through her extraordinarily liberal patronizing of the arts, many works of worth were brought to Versailles. For her Louis built the Grand Trianon. This is a charming villa ideally situated in the park and representing the highest touch in fascinating beauty.

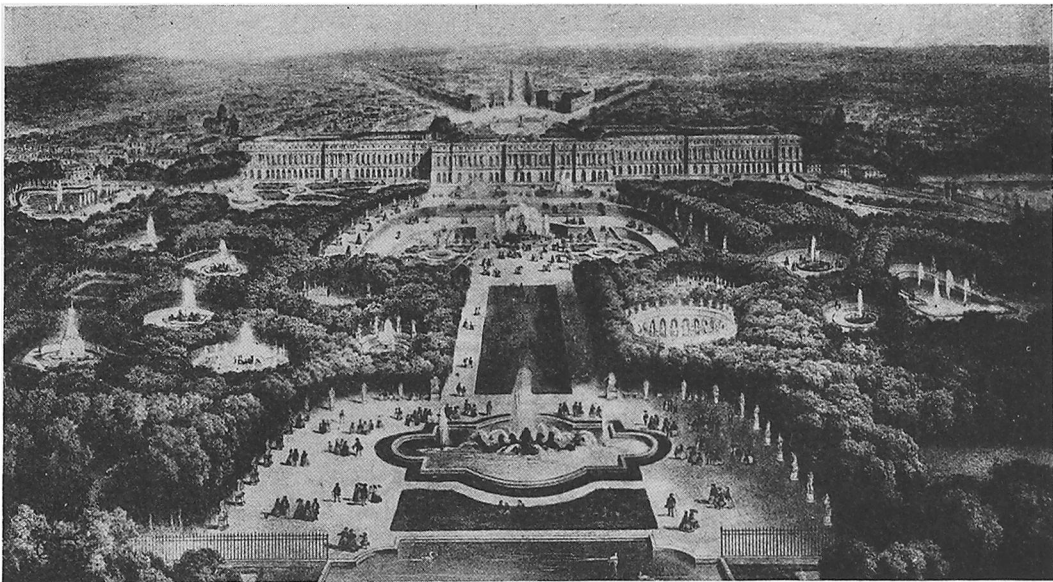
Strangely enough, the Petit Trianon was also built for a woman. Louis XVI whose susceptibility to feminine charms led him to the companionship of such women as Madame de Pompadour, built this dainty pavilion for Madame Du Barry. In later days *Le Petit Trianon* became Marie Antoinette's favorite residence.

After its construction this palace became the social center of Europe. The king bade members of the nobility come and live with him and the result was that the beautiful structure fairly swarmed with fauning counts, and dukes, and what-nots. Attracted by the liberal patronage afforded all the arts, authors, minstrels, poets, artists, and all manner of unearned increment-eers flocked to Versailles.

The days were filled with hunting parties, the nights with social affairs. Now and then the king, having tired of court functions indulged in a war and left Versailles almost deserted while showing his courtiers a few bloody sights.

And all this time the French people looked on with growing resentment. Watching others dance while you can barely walk as a result of starvation does not go well with human nature.

Soon came the break. In 1789 the people rose up in arms and marched to Versailles. Up to the very doors of the historic palace they marched and demanded the family of the king as prisoners. They were awed by the sight of a woman—none



GRAND VIEW OF THE PARK AND CASTLE—VERSAILLES

other than Marie Antoinette, their queen—who stepped bravely out upon balcony and ordered the mob to leave. The answer to their command stunned the people for a moment but only for a moment. Then they rushed into the palace itself and dragged the royal family off to Paris. The event marked the end of the palace of Versailles as a residence. From then till now it has remained a huge museum of French history and art.

Versailles has witnessed more events of international interest than perhaps any other building. In it were born Louis XV, Louis XVI, and Louis XVIII. In 1783 it saw the ratification of a treaty by which England recognized the independence of the American people as a sovereign state. It is a circumstance peculiarly in accord with the similarity of great events that today the right of men to govern themselves is being acknowledged in the same corridors which witnessed the recognition of our land as a nation.

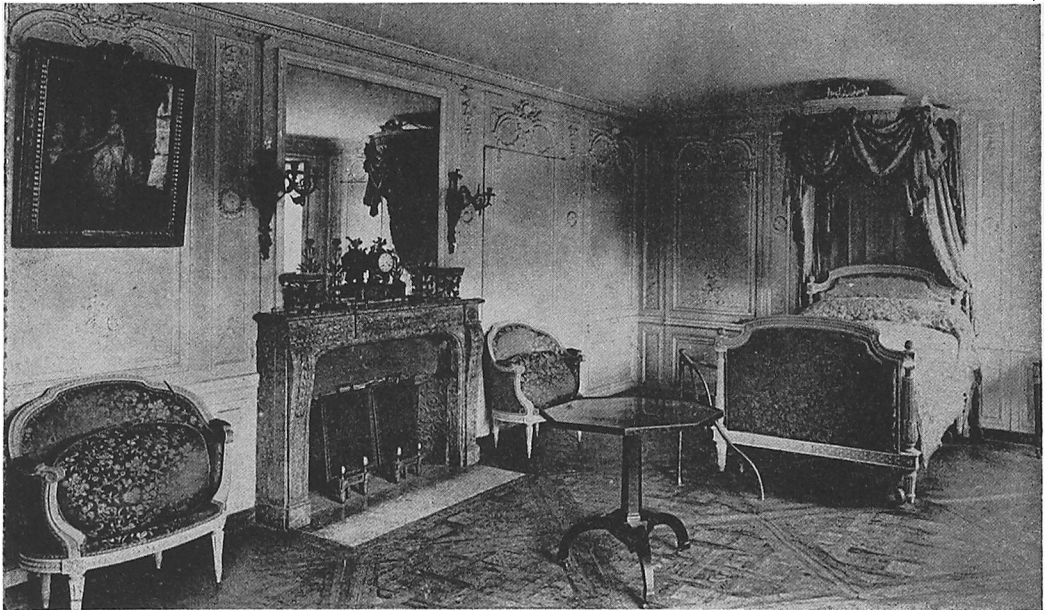
In 1789 just prior to the revolution, the states-general of France met there and founded a constitution on the same princi-

ples that have actuated the intense sacrifices of this past war. Let us hope that that spirit still pervades those halls of Versailles.

Versailles has felt the edged heel of German militarism as well as have other parts of France. During the cruel days of the Franco-Prussian War when Paris itself had fallen under German rule, this proud suburb was used as a headquarters for the Imperial Arms.

There followed an act most disgraceful to the name of this mighty Versailles. William I of Germany, having fought a highly successful war with France, gave orders that he be proclaimed Emperor of Prussia in the halls of Versailles. His orders were carried out with great ceremony in 1871. This is another act that proved to the French that they must crush their foe—and humanity's.

And today it is justly coincidental, is it not that the Emperor William whom we know should behold the end of his dynasty in the same majestic corridors that sheltered the coronation and triumph of one of his chief predecessors.



LITTLE TRIANON—MARIE ANTOINETTE'S BEDROOM—VERSAILLES